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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

##### Erdogan Nominates Gul as Turkey's Next President

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan, in meeting with the AKP group at the parliament Tuesday, nominated Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as the ruling party's presidential candidate. In a press conference after the announcement, Gul stressed he would uphold the nation's moral values and the Republic's principles.

Following the announcement, CHP leader Deniz Baykal said after a meeting with Gul that his party would not take part in the parliamentary voting for the next president. Mustafa Ozyurek, a senior CHP lawmaker, told reporters his party would appeal to the Constitutional Court if fewer than two-thirds of MPs (367) attend the first round of voting. Intellectual Islamist-oriented Zaman is confident that opposition parties Anavatan and DYP will participate in the first round of the presidential elections on Friday, echoing the AKP administration's expectation of the participation of at least 370 MPs.

Several mainstream papers highlight Gul's wife Hayrunnisa would be the first "first lady" who wears a headscarf and note that in 1998, she filed a complaint at the European Court of Human Rights against headscarf restrictions in Turkey, but pulled back her complaint when Gul became Prime Minister in 2002. Gul responded to questions on the issue by saying that wearing the headscarf was an "individual right."

Asked about the candidacy of Gul, deputy chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Ergun Saygun recalled remarks by TGS chief Yasar Buyukanit who expressed hope earlier this month that the next president would be "loyal to the principles of the secular-democratic republic, not just in words but in essence." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says the military has reissued a covert warning to Gul that he must respect secularism in deed, not only in words. The paper quotes Gul as saying in the 1990s when he was the deputy-chairman of the now disbanded RP (Welfare Party) that

"In Turkey, the Republic has come to an end. We definitely want to change this secular system."

The Turkish business community welcomed Gul's candidacy as "a positive development." Guler Sabanci, chairwoman of a leading Turkish conglomerate, Sabanci Holding, congratulated Erdogan for the "maturity" and "exemplary democratic attitude" the PM displayed.

Hurriyet says Erdogan signaled he has plenty more work to do in reforming Turkey when he turned down the presidency for himself. "Historic self-sacrifice" reads a page one headline in the Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak, praising Erdogan for renouncing the presidency and proposing his close ally Gul. The leftist/nationalist mainstream papers also note Erdogan, hoping for a sweeping victory in the upcoming parliamentary elections, expects to become strong enough to change the constitution and introduce a presidential system.

#### Editorial Commentary on Gul's Nomination

A commentary in liberal Radikal says Gul's presidency obtained without 367 votes might be carried to the Constitutional Court, and the ensuing process will inevitably stoke tensions in Turkey. The paper adds, however, that the resulting tense atmosphere will have an adverse effect on CHP's chances in the general elections. A commentary in mainstream Vatan argues the struggle over power within the AKP will continue since Gul did not want the presidency but was hoping to take back the post of Prime Minister he handed over to Erdogan on March 2003, four months after the AKP came to power in November 2002.

Oktay Eksi, writing in mainstream daily Hurriyet, believes PM Erdogan made a "great and unexpected sacrifice" by introducing Gul as the AKP candidate, and concluded that "even though

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presidential-candidate Gul is no different than Erdogan in essence, Gul has a smoother style. About the headscarf of Mrs. Gul, it will certainly be a controversial topic. But she now has a chance to prove being a contemporary woman of modern Turkey and to embrace the entire nation which will help to eliminate worries."

Melih Asik writing in the mainstream daily Milliyet worries that "one political party now controls the system with only 25 percent of the votes by taking over the presidency, prime ministry and the parliamentary speaker role -- that is impossible to fit in with the idea of a democracy. There is no hope for secularism either. The headscarf will be at the highest state rank for the first time. Erdogan is the head of executive branch, and his very ideas are at the presidency. It all means that moderate Islam project is proceeding in a determined fashion."

Optimistic about the future, Sami Kohen writes in Milliyet: "Gul's Presidency will be a plus for international relations. Gul is expected to engage more in foreign affairs, so both the Presidency and the government will be in tune. Through his active style of diplomacy, Gul also can play a facilitating role in resolving issues such as relations with the EU and northern Iraq."

#### Bush's Armenian Remembrance Day Message

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan, Radikal, Zaman and others report that in his annual April 24 Armenian Remembrance Day message, President Bush "softened" the statement and, "once again did not use the word genocide." "Each year on this day, we pause to remember the victims of one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, when as many as 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, many of them victims of mass killings and forced exile. The world must never forget this painful chapter of its history," papers quote from the statement.

#### Samsun-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline

All papers report that the groundbreaking of the Samsun-Ceyhan oil pipeline, also called the Trans-Anatolia Project (TAP), was held in the Mediterranean coastal town of Ceyhan near Adana. The pipeline will carry crude oil from Central Asia and the Caspian Basin to the Mediterranean through Turkey. Papers report the US Embassy in Ankara, backing the project, issued a statement congratulating

Turkey and the developers of the project. The statement said the project has "great potential for enhancing global energy security as an alternative to the congested Bosphorus," report papers.

TV Highlights  
NTV (6 A.M.)

#### Domestic News

- Abdullah Gul's presidential candidacy was enthusiastically welcomed in his hometown of the central Anatolian city of Kayseri.

- Turkish Cyprus "prime minister" Ferdi Sabit Soyer welcomed Abdullah Gul's candidacy for president, stressing the Turkish Cypriots were pleased to see democratization and institutionalization taking place in Turkey.

- EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana is to meet Wednesday with Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani in Ankara to discuss Tehran's nuclear program.

- British Air Chief Marshall Sir Jock Stirrup paid a visit to Turkish General Staff chief General Yasar Buyukanit in Ankara.

#### International News

- Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani said they have no hostile intentions towards Turkey, adding problems in northern Iraq stem

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from the reluctance of Turkey to accept the PKK problem as an internal one.

- European lawmakers of Turkish heritage have sent a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel to press for a solution in Cyprus.

- Turkey is reportedly pressing for the sacking of UNSYG special representative for Cyprus Michael Moller, saying Moller is not impartial.

- The armed wing of the Palestinian Hamas movement has said it is ending a five-month truce with Israel.

- Iran's President Ahmadinejad has proposed public talks with President Bush on a wide range of issues.

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WILSON